

E. Zell Steever
Groton, Connecticut

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Madam Chair Senator Cohen, Co-Chair Representative Lemar Vice Chair Lopes, Vice Chair Berger-Girvalo, Ranking Member Hwang, Ranking Member Kennedy and distinguished Members of the Transportation Committee: My name is Zell Steever and I am the Chairman of the Groton Resiliency and Sustainability in Groton Connecticut and a Member of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council. I am offering support and suggestions on six Bills as follows:

S.B. No. 178 – AN ACT CONCERNING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE EXPENDITURE OF CERTAIN FEDERAL FUNDS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

It is my opinion that S. B. 178 would provide the public via the Internet, better access, transparency and accountability for the Department of Transportation's use of funds received pursuant to Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, P.L. 117-58. This is simply good government using social media.

S.B. No. 1078 (RAISED) AN ACT CONERNING RAIL SERVICE

It is my opinion that S.B. 1078 in Section 1. restores full passenger rail service on Shore Line East (SLE) for the public along Connecticut's shoreline. The public uses trains when they run on a regular basis thought out the day, on a schedule that gets people where they want to go, and in a timely manner.

While subsidies are cited as a reason why the SLE should not receive its full scheduled by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), this logic is flawed. What is known in the passenger rail industry is that providing quality public transportation is the best way to increase ridership, which in turn reduces the subsidies. We have the obligation to provide quality service for the traveling public on Shore Line East.

Section 1 (b). It is important the Department of Transportation purchase new rail cars on a regular basis. The Waterbury and Danbury branches need new rail cars. In addition, the time has come to expand public passenger rail service to New Milford, Seymour, Shelton, and Derby.

Section 2. Direct the Department of Transportation to undertake (1). a feasibility study for passenger service between Hartford and Middletown, and (2). a feasibility study to operate hybrid trains on the Danbury line.

I would suggest that this section be amended adding: CT DOT is directed to conduct a feasibility study and undertake a demonstration pilot project for operating battery M80s (using a dual battery/diesel hybrid system) to determine if a self-contained M80 rail car(s) might be used to operate passenger car(s) service (to replace use of locomotives) until a full overhead catenary system is installed and becomes operational on a branch line. A full life-cycle energy, economic, environmental and climate change analysis shall be a part of this study in cooperation with the CT DEEP.

Section 3 (b) In this section add: ... authorized and directed ... to enter into any agreement with the state of Rhode Island ... necessary for the state's participation of rail passenger service on the Shore Line East and the proposed Norwich Branch Line into Rhode Island and/ or Massachusetts.

Section 3 (d). Add at the end: ... or for future rail service on the Norwich branch line.

S.B. 1079 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING RAIL SERVICE

It is my opinion that S. B. 1079 best reflects the positions of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council. The council has listened to the concerns of the commuting public. We each have our own personal experiences with Connecticut's rail network and through out the northeast and supports S.B. 1079.

I would like to support Section 2. in this Bill, which direct the CTDOT to study the feasibility of an mobile application for the purposes stated herein. The simple fact is that this technology already exist, is operational, and is being used by both the traveling public and the transportation provider with great success. This technology needs to come to Connecticut now, sooner rather than later.

The ubiquitous cell phone and smartcards of today are being used so that the public transportation customer can easily plan, navigate and pay for pubic transportation across jurisdictions and across borders without the assistance of transit agency personnel. This empowers people and provides freedom for the customer and the service providers

For the public transportation providers CTDOT and rail operators, the smart phone application and the smartcard allows the providers to accurately, in real time, “measure the operations” of the rail system, and thus allows the provider the real-time opportunity to better manage the transportation system. The effective use of computer base applications, cell phone and smartcard technology is a win-win strategy for the agency, the providers and the customers. If the public transportation system is managed better the transportation customer will be better served. If you do not measure use, then you cannot manage the system! This applies to public transportation today.

Suggest the on line 19 after the word *develop*, insert of the word operate.

Section 4. The proposed new substituted language for Section 13b-212b, in my opinion, is necessary and appropriate for improving the relation between the CTDOT and the CCRC for the benefit of the traveling public and better coordination between the legislative and administrative branches in Connecticut.

S.B. No. 1082 (RAISED) AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
REGARDING A REDUCTION IN BLOOD ALCOHOL LIMITS FOR IMPARED
DRIVING AND BOATING, ESTABLISH THE CONECTICUT PUBLIC

TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL, THE SHORE LINE EAST STUDY AND MOTOR VEHICLES IN LIVERY SERVICE.

It is my opinion that proposed S. B. No. 1082, Section 1 through 9 will improve the safety for users and operators of a motor vehicle and vessels in Connecticut.

I am opposed to Section 10. and Section 11. in S.B. No. 1082 as, in my opinion, this does not fully reflect the stakeholder or the riders of Connecticut's public transportation network including both rail and bus services. While creating the Public Transportation Council may be a desirable goal, this proposal does a disservice to Connecticut's rail and transit customers. This proposed Bill does not provide for a balance from both rail and bus service providers, as written.

In addition and with all due respect, the proposed Bill (Lines 229 - 250) intentionally strikes out the requirement that the CCRC may "request and shall receive from any department, division, board, bureau, commission, agency, public authority of the state such assistance and data as it requests." This was done, apparently so that the CTDOT no longer needs to provide data to the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council (CCRC), an advocacy organization, that was created by the legislature to represent commuters and public transportation customers. This appears an attempt to silence the CCRC.

Section 12. It is a most unfortunate that the CTDOT has been unable to complete the feasibility study required in Section 20 of public act 21-175 on the Eastern Connecticut Rail and Transit Feasibility Study in a timely manner, particularly when the additional appropriation in 2021 were provided to CTDOT in order to be able to submit the results of such study to the General Assembly in a timely manner!

I have strongly advocated, supported and participated in the CTDOT feasibility study, and I continue to want a *solid* and *thorough* study to be completed as soon as possible. Without a positive feasibility study, the state will not be able to access federal funds that are currently available. This simply delays any possible expanded or new rail service in Eastern Connecticut, and delays implementing the many important

environmental, social or economic opportunities that such expanded and new service will enable.

S. B. No. 1083 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TRANSPORTATION CARBON BUDGET FOR THE STATE

It is my opinion that S.B. No. 1083 is an important step for the transportation sector to begin the necessary action needed to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. In Connecticut the transportation sector is responsible for 40 percent of all GHGs and this is not sustainable. Green House Gases emissions are the main driver responsible for the climate change resulting in overall increases in global temperatures and, in the case of Connecticut, sea level rise. Connecticut needs to immediately begin taking action to reduce GHGs emissions and developing a “carbon budget” that sets maximum amounts of GHGs emissions permitted in the transportation sector.

The dates proposed in this Bill are not appropriate. The dates for the various actions need to be greatly accelerated as climate change is upon us all, and Connecticut needs to act. Delay is no longer acceptable in Connecticut. I respectfully encourage the Bill be amended as follows: Line 26. amended to July 1, 2024.

H. B. No. 6742 (RAISED) AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR COMMERCIAL RAIL FREIGHT LINES IMPROVEMENT

It is my opinion H. B. No. 6742 would provide for the general improvement for commercial rail lines many of which in past decades supported passenger rail service in Connecticut and Southern New England and may be reconsidered again for such service in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to a statement for the six legislative proposals.

Respectfully

Zell Steever,
Chair, Groton Resiliency and Sustainability Task Force and Member of the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council

